



Specific Learning Disability

Florida Definition

A specific learning disability is defined as a disorder in one or more of the basic learning processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, that may manifest in significant difficulties affecting the ability to listen, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematics. Associated conditions may include, but are not limited to, dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, or developmental aphasia. A specific learning disability does not include learning problems that are primarily the result of a visual, hearing, motor, intellectual, or emotional/behavioral disability, limited English proficiency, or environmental, cultural, or economic factors. This definition is found in State Board of Education Rule 6A-6.03018, F.A.C.

<http://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/ese-eligibility/specific-learning-disabilities-sld/>

General Overview

Learning disability is a general term that describes specific kinds of learning problems. Learning disabilities can cause a person to have trouble learning and using certain skills. The skills most often affected are: reading, writing, listening, speaking, reasoning, and doing math. Learning disabilities (LD) vary from person to person. One person with LD may not have the same kind of learning problems as another person with LD.

Researchers think that learning disabilities are caused by differences in how a person's brain works and how it processes information. Children with learning disabilities are not "dumb" or "lazy." In fact, they usually have average or above average intelligence. Their brains just process information differently. There is no "cure" for learning disabilities. They are life-long. However, children with LD can be high achievers and can be taught ways to get around the learning disability. With the right help, children with LD can and do learn successfully.

When a child has a learning disability, he or she:

- may have trouble learning the alphabet, rhyming words, or connecting letters to their sounds;
- may make many mistakes when reading aloud, and repeat and pause often
- may not understand what he or she reads;
- may have real trouble with spelling;
- may have very messy handwriting or hold a pencil awkwardly;
- may struggle to express ideas in writing;
- may learn language late and have a limited vocabulary;

- may have trouble remembering the sounds that letters make or hearing slight differences between words;
- may have trouble understanding jokes, comic strips, and sarcasm;
- may have trouble following directions;
- may mispronounce words or use a wrong word that sounds similar;
- may have trouble organizing what he or she wants to say or not be able to think of the word he or she needs for writing or conversation;
- may not follow the social rules of conversation, such as taking turns, and may stand too close to the listener;
- may confuse math symbols and misread numbers;
- may not be able to retell a story in order (what happened first, second, third);
- may not know where to begin a task or how to go on from there.

Characteristics

Primary

Cognitive: Impaired cognitive functioning

- Examples include problems with reading, spelling; processing problems including memory and thought organization; and metacognition.

Communication: Problems with the output of expression of thoughts and ideas

- Examples include developmental aphasia, dysgraphia, and the interpretation of body language

Sensory: Problems with sensory-perceptual/acuity; auditory perceptual difficulties; and sensory integration

- Examples include problems with seeing figure-ground, closure and spatial relationships; difficulties with sound discriminations and/or sound recognition; and oversensitivity to lights, sounds, smells, touch, or taste.

Secondary

Emotional/Social: Problems with self-regulation, stressed internal emotional state; non-verbal communication

- Example: Problems with self-control and accepting responsibility for one's actions; sabotage success and undermine self-confidence as a residual effect of an internal emotional state that has experienced failure and frustration. Inability to read gestures, nuances, facial expressions and body language lead to problems with interpersonal relationships and social issues.